

[20 March, 2001]

RAJYA SABHA

- (b) if so, the suggestions made therein;
- (c) whether Government have formulated any policy on this basis;
- (d) if so, the salient features thereof; and
- (e) by when it is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI): (a) to (e) The 4th meeting of the National Water Resources Council under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Prime Minister was held on 7th July, 2000 for the adoption of revised National Water Policy. During the meeting, the deliberations established a broad consensus among the states on most of the issues contained in the proposed policy. However, there were some areas of differences such as:-

1. Formulation of guidelines for water allocation amongst States.
2. Amendment of Inter-State Water Disputes Act. 1956
3. Establishing appropriate River Basin Organisation with statutory powers.
4. Legislation for developing standardized national information system.

The Council decided to constitute a Working Group of Ministers of all the States/Union territories under the Chairmanship of Union Minister of Water Resources to examine the draft of the revised National Water Policy and the draft of the National Policy Guidelines for water allocation amongst states, in order to achieve greater convergence and agreement on issues involving divergent views amongst the members of the Council. The Working Group has been constituted under the chairmanship of the Union Minister of Water Resources on 9th October, 2000 with Ministers from all the States and Lt. Governor/Administrator of Union Territories. Implementation of the revised National Water Policy depends on the outcome of the meeting of the Working Group.

Lifting of Ban on Internet Telephony

***358. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY:** Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to lift the ban on Internet Telephony;

(b) whether it is also a fact that by lifting the ban, VSNL (Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd.) will be affected; and

(c) if so, what remedial measures Government propose to take to protect the interests of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (c) While at present, in accordance with the New Telecom Policy (NTP-99), Internet Telephony is not permitted, Government is also required under this policy to monitor technological innovations and their impact on national development and review this issue at an appropriate time. Accordingly, Government has constituted an Expert Group, which includes a representative of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, to review the matter. The report of the Group is awaited.

WTO Report on Subsidy to Farmers

†*359. DR. D. MASTHAN:
SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the report published by WTO in which it has been stated that developed countries are regularly giving subsidy to their farmers annually;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that this subsidy is 42 per cent in European Union countries, 69 per cent in Japan, 20 per cent in Canada and 16 per cent in America; and

(c) if not, the details in this regard and the percentage of subsidy of their total annual agricultural production which is being given to the farmers in India at present?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMARABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) As per the notifications filed by European Union, Japan, Canada and United States of America with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the total domestic support provided by them to their agriculture sector as a percentage of their value of agricultural production and their export subsidies

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.